

~The Doubts~

When I was about halfway through writing these essays, my husband and I took a trip to Florida to escape a fierce Michigan winter. I was still referring to my stories as “my writing project,” having not yet settled on a title. I would sit at the computer working and hear voices taunting me. “*What makes you think you can write?*” the voice would ask. “*Who do you think is ever going to read this?*” it would persist. “*You really have nothing worthwhile to say and no one cares what you think anyway.*” “*You are going to embarrass yourself!*” “*Admit that you are way out of your league here!*”

I headed to Florida full of doubts and not really sure I should continue with the project. This same doubting had happened earlier in the process and I had been encouraged to continue by two friends who had read a sampling of my work and wanted to read more. Now that I was halfway through my task, and had told several people that I was working on something, it would have seemed like a greater failure to throw in the towel. I was looking for a sign to tell me that the project had value and that I should persist through the doubts.

We nestled into our pew at Saint William’s Church in Naples to hear the homily for the Second Sunday of Lent. The Gospel Reading was the story of the Transfiguration, when Jesus took Peter, John and James up the mountain to pray and was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white and they saw Him in His glory. Moses and Elijah also appeared and began conversing with Him. The story ends with the voice of God speaking from a cloud saying, “*This is my chosen Son; listen to Him.*”

During the entire homily the priest’s words seemed to speak directly to me. His opening line drew me right in. “*Let’s face it,*” he said, “*most of us are never going to have Jesus appear to us in His glory, chat with Moses and Elijah on a mountaintop or have the Lord God speak to us from a cloud. But, God is trying to speak with us every single day, in so many ways, and we are simply not answering. We are just not picking up.*”

I turned to my husband at this point and said, “*‘God calling, please pick up!’ That would be a great title for my writing project.*” He nodded his head and said yes, he liked that. I had suggested many other titles previously and he had not been crazy about any of them. This was a good sign.

The priest went on to discuss a study that found the average American spends nine hours a day interacting with media. We are attached to our communication devices whether it is our cell phones, blackberries, I-pods, CDs, DVDs, televisions, computers, the internet or something else. The only thing we do more than this is breathe. Yet,

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most of us set aside little time for communicating with God. He is there; we are simply not checking in.

I again turned to my husband, with wide eyes, and said something like, “*this is exactly what I’ve been trying to say in my essays! God is with us every moment but we simply aren’t tuned in.*” He patted my hand and gave me a “yes, dear” nod and then indicated that he was trying to listen to the priest also and that I needed to stop talking. Alright, okay, I would listen but I was really excited.

This enthusiastic priest then told numerous stories that most

people would consider coincidences but that he interpreted as examples of God communicating with us. His parents once got two, separate, flat tires on the way to close on a new home. After the second tire blew, his mother turned to his father and emphatically stated that they were not going to buy that house. Another time his elderly father's car broke down but fortunately it happened right across the street from his auto mechanic. Yet, another time, his friend yelled out to the heavens for help with a faulty auto part and the part immediately became functional. Just before leaving for Naples, I had completed an essay on "angel moments" that spoke of many God-incidences that have occurred to my mother and me. Now I was suddenly listening with complete attention to this priest's sharing of similar moments in his life experience. His sermon was becoming the sign I had been looking for to encourage me to continue with my writing project. This was one timely call from God, at a moment when I really needed it, and I was definitely picking up.

My husband got an earful on the way out of church. *"It was like the priest was writing a chapter of my book for me! I felt like he was speaking directly to me, telling me to persevere. If we found his stories interesting, maybe someone out there will find my stories interesting also,"* I exclaimed. We were both pumped up and smiling from our good fortune. After randomly choosing this parish and this Saturday Mass in Naples, at a time when we were both unsure about a rookie's chance for success in the world of writing, we were touched by how encouraging the priest's words were to both of us.

Our plan after Mass was to head to the local bookstore and purchase some reading material. I had made every effort to pack lightly so as not to have to check a bag, and had not brought anything to read. I headed to the "Religion/Inspiration" section to check out the selections. One title jumped out at me and as I browsed the introduction I received one more sign telling me that I was on the right path.

As this book was beginning to take shape, in the cold months back in Michigan, I had decided that it would be best used as a

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journaling companion. The idea to write fifty-two essays, one for each week of the year, followed by questions to prompt journal entries, had just been solidified. I felt that the fifty-two chapter, week-by-week approach, might fill a niche with non-daily journalers. It could also serve as a supplement for daily devotional users who occasionally wanted to read something with a little more substance.

Almost near the end of the introduction to the book I had selected, the author said he had produced many reflections during the past year but here were "fifty two" he had decided to publish. That number jolted me. Fifty two was the very number I had decided upon. It worked for him and it was going to work for me. *God calling, please pick up!* was going to be fifty-two chapters long and it was going to be completed. God had my complete attention. The doubts were gone and this author was inspired.